

PSALM 19:7-14 THE LAW OF THE LORD IS PERFECT, REFRESHING THE SOUL. THE STATUTES OF THE LORD ARE TRUSTWORTHY, MAKING WISE THE SIMPLE. ⁸THE PRECEPTS OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT, GIVING JOY TO THE HEART. THE COMMANDS OF THE LORD ARE RADIANT, GIVING LIGHT TO THE EYES. ⁹THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS PURE, ENDURING FOREVER. THE DECREES OF THE LORD ARE FIRM, AND ALL OF THEM ARE RIGHTEOUS. ¹⁰THEY ARE MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD, THAN MUCH PURE GOLD; THEY ARE SWEETER THAN HONEY, THAN HONEY FROM THE HONEYCOMB. ¹¹BY THEM YOUR SERVANT IS WARNED; IN KEEPING THEM THERE IS GREAT REWARD. ¹²BUT WHO CAN DISCERN THEIR OWN ERRORS? FORGIVE MY HIDDEN FAULTS. ¹³KEEP YOUR SERVANT ALSO FROM WILLFUL SINS; MAY THEY NOT RULE OVER ME. THEN I WILL BE BLAMELESS, INNOCENT OF GREAT TRANSGRESSION. ¹⁴MAY THESE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THIS MEDITATION OF MY HEART BE PLEASING IN YOUR SIGHT, LORD, MY ROCK AND MY REDEEMER.

JOHN 2:13-22 ¹³WHEN IT WAS ALMOST TIME FOR THE JEWISH PASSOVER, JESUS WENT UP TO JERUSALEM. ¹⁴IN THE TEMPLE COURTS HE FOUND PEOPLE SELLING CATTLE, SHEEP AND DOVES, AND OTHERS SITTING AT TABLES EXCHANGING MONEY. ¹⁵SO HE MADE A WHIP OUT OF CORDS, AND DROVE ALL FROM THE TEMPLE COURTS, BOTH SHEEP AND CATTLE; HE SCATTERED THE COINS OF THE MONEY CHANGERS AND OVERTURNED THEIR TABLES. ¹⁶TO THOSE WHO SOLD DOVES HE SAID, "GET THESE OUT OF HERE! STOP TURNING MY FATHER'S HOUSE INTO A MARKET!" ¹⁷HIS DISCIPLES REMEMBERED THAT IT IS WRITTEN: "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME." ¹⁸THE JEWS THEN RESPONDED TO HIM, "WHAT SIGN CAN YOU SHOW US TO PROVE YOUR AUTHORITY TO DO ALL THIS?" ¹⁹JESUS ANSWERED THEM, "DESTROY THIS TEMPLE, AND I WILL RAISE IT AGAIN IN THREE DAYS." ²⁰THEY REPLIED, "IT HAS TAKEN FORTY-SIX YEARS TO BUILD THIS TEMPLE, AND YOU ARE GOING TO RAISE IT IN THREE DAYS?" ²¹BUT THE TEMPLE HE HAD SPOKEN OF WAS HIS BODY. ²²AFTER HE WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD, HIS DISCIPLES RECALLED WHAT HE HAD SAID. THEN THEY BELIEVED THE SCRIPTURE AND THE WORDS THAT JESUS HAD SPOKEN.

THE LAW AND THE TEMPLE, THEY COULD BE CALLED THE TWO PILLARS OF JEWISH FAITH AND LIFE DURING THE TIME JESUS WALKED THE EARTH.

THE LAW IS GOD'S GIFT TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, IT HELPED FORM THEM INTO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

PSALM 19 IS A SONG OF PRAISE TO THE LORD, BEGINNING WITH PRAISE FOR GOD AS CREATOR.

THE SECOND HALF OF THE PSALM, WHICH WAS READ TODAY, IS PRAISE FOR THE LAW.

IT IS STRANGE TO THINK ABOUT ANYONE GIVING THANKS FOR LAWS, EVEN ONES THEY AGREE WITH.

GOD'S LAW HOWEVER, DIFFERS FROM HUMAN LAWS, IN THAT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND OTHER STATUTES ISSUED DIRECTLY BY GOD WERE INTEND TO BLESS HIS PEOPLE.

THUS THE PSALMIST CELEBRATES THE LAW AS A WONDERFUL GIFT FROM GOD THAT BENEFITS ALL OF HIS PEOPLE.

THE WORDS OF PRAISE REVOLVE AROUND THE IDEA THE LAW OF THE LORD DRAWS THOSE WHO FOLLOW IT CLOSER TO GOD.

THE LAW IS WHAT MAKES A LIFE LIVED IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD POSSIBLE.

THE PSALMIST USED SEVERAL DIFFERENT WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE ALL ENCOMPASSING NATURE OF GOD'S INSTRUCTION AND LOVE FOUND IN HIS LAW.

SO LET US CONSIDER HOW THE LAW IS DESCRIBED: GOD'S TORAH OR LAW IS PERFECT, IT CANNOT BE IMPROVED UPON.

GOD'S LAW BRINGS RENEWAL TO THE SOULS, THAT IS THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO LOVE THE LORD.

HIS DECISIONS BRING WISDOM TO OUR CONTEMPLATIONS, HIS RULES MAKE THE HEART OF THOSE WHO LOVE GOD REJOICE.

GOD'S COMMANDMENTS GO EVEN FURTHER, BY ENLIGHTENING OUR MINDS ABOUT GOD AND HIS WILL.

FINALLY, THE JUDGMENTS OF THE LAW SHOW US HOW TO WALK THE ON PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THEREFORE, THE LAW OF THE LORD IS TO BE CELEBRATED, BECAUSE IT TEACHES US HOW TO FEAR AND HONOR GOD, SO THAT WE MAY LIVE AS HIS FAITHFUL CHILDREN.

OF COURSE THE DOWNSIDE OF THIS IS- THE LAW ALSO REVEALS OUR SINFULNESS.

AND YET THIS REVELATION IS GOOD IF IT DRAWS US CLOSER TO THE LORD THROUGH REPENTANCE.

HOWEVER, EVEN HEARING ALL OF THIS, IT STILL MAY BE HARD TO RELATE TO THE PSALMIST'S EXTREME DELIGHT IN THE LAW, WHICH LEADS TO AN ENTHUSIASTIC CELEBRATION OF IT.

THERE IS, HOWEVER, ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK AT THE WORDS OF PSALM 19 THAT MAY ELICIT OUR PRAISE, AND THAT IS TO THINK ABOUT JESUS.

MATTHEW 5:17 RECORDS JESUS SAYING: "DO NOT THINK THAT I CAME TO DESTROY THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS. I DID NOT COME TO DESTROY BUT TO FULFILL."

JESUS DOES FULFILL THE LAW. HE IS THE ONE WHO CAN REVIVE OUR SOULS, DELIGHT OUR HEARTS, ENLIGHTEN OUR MINDS, AND BRING US THE WISDOM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

IT IS THROUGH JESUS THAT WE BECOME THE PEOPLE OF GOD: FORGIVEN AND FREED TO LIVE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.

JESUS EMBODIES THE PURPOSE OF THE TORAH-GOD'S LAW IN THAT HE MAKES US RIGHT WITH GOD, AND GIVES OUR LIVES MEANING BY MAKING US INTO THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

TRULY, OUR LORD AND SAVIOR IS INDEED MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD OR SWEETER THAN HONEYCOMB. IN FOLLOWING HIM THERE IS GREAT REWARD.

A POEM CALLED "GENTLE JESUS MEEK AND MILD" BY CHARLES WESLEY, SPEAKS ABOUT OUR SAVIOR AND HOW HE IS A BLESSING TO US. HERE ARE A FEW VERSES:

"GENTLE JESUS, MEEK AND MILD, LOOK UPON A LITTLE CHILD; PITY MY SIMPLICITY, SUFFER ME TO COME TO THEE.

FAIN I WOULD BE AS THOU ART, GIVE ME THY OBEDIENT HEART; THOU ART PITIFUL AND KIND, LET ME HAVE THY LOVING MIND.

LAMB OF GOD, I LOOK TO THEE, THOU SHALT MY EXAMPLE BE; THOU ART GENTLE, MEEK, AND MILD, THOU WAST ONCE A LITTLE CHILD."

NOTICE SOME OF THE WORDS WESLEY USED TO DESCRIBE JESUS: GENTLE, MEEK, MILD, LAMB OF GOD, PITIFUL, AND KIND.

THESE PAINT A PICTURE OF OUR SAVIOR THAT IS COMFORTING AND HOPEFUL. BUT AS WE HEARD IN THE GOSPEL STORY THIS COMMON VIEW OF JESUS IS NOT ALL THERE IS TO HIM.

THE GOSPEL READING BEGINS EARLY, IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS, WHEN HE AND HIS DISCIPLES GO TO JERUSALEM TO CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER.

HE SAW THERE. MERCHANTS WHO WERE SET UP IN THE COURT OF THE GENTILES TO SERVE THOSE CAME TO MAKE SACRIFICES OR OFFERINGS.

BUT DOING DO DISRUPTED THE WORSHIP OF THE PEOPLE CONFINED TO THAT AREA.

THIS IS WHY JESUS USED A HOME-MADE WHIP TO DRIVE OUT HUMANS AND ANIMALS ALIKE.

IN THE PROCESS HE OVERTURNED TABLES AND SCATTERED MONEY ON THE GROUND. AND HE ACCUSED THEM OF DISHONORING "HIS FATHER'S HOUSE."

THIS PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CERTAINLY DOES NOT FIT THE DESCRIPTION OF JESUS IN THE POEM.

AND YET, THE STORY OF THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE APPEARS IN ALL OF THE GOSPELS.

IT CAN MAKE US FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, BECAUSE THIS IS NOT THE JESUS WE LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT.

BUT THERE IS SOMETHING IMPORTANT WE NEED TO REMEMBER IF WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND WHY JESUS WAS SO ANGRY AT WHAT HE SAW.

THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM WAS MUCH MORE THAN A SIMPLE A PLACE OF WORSHIP, A “CHURCH” BUILDING.

IT WAS UNIQUE. IT WAS THE ONLY PLACE ON EARTH THE JEWS BELIEVED THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY DWELLED.

IT WAS LITERALLY THE “HOUSE OF GOD” IN THAT GOD’S PRESENCE ABIDED IN THE INNER PART OF THE TEMPLE.

THIS MADE WORSHIP IN THE TEMPLE SPECIAL, MORE SO THAN WORSHIPING GOD IN A SYNAGOGUE OR ANY OTHER PLACE.

ANOTHER POINT THAT CAN HELP US UNDERSTAND THIS STORY AS IT APPEARS IN JOHN’S GOSPEL, IS HIS VIEW OF WORSHIP. TRUE WORSHIP IS AN IMPORTANT THEME IN JOHN’S GOSPEL.

THIS MAY BE ONE REASON HE PUT THE STORY OF JESUS’ CLEANSING THE TEMPLE AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS MINISTRY, RATHER THAN DURING HOLY WEEK, LIKE IN OTHER GOSPELS.

ALSO IN THIS GOSPEL, FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF JOHN’S WRITING UP UNTIL ITS FINAL WORD, JESUS IS PRESENTED AS THE ONE WHO UNIQUELY PERSONIFIES THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

THEREFORE, HE GOES TO THE TEMPLE AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY AND DENOUNCES THOSE WHO WERE DEFILING AND DETRACTING FROM THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD.

FURTHERMORE, BY HIS ACTIONS IN THE TEMPLE THAT DAY, JESUS WAS ACTUALLY PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO WORSHIP THE LORD, WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF THE TEMPLE.

HE HINTS AT WHAT IS TO COME WHEN HE WAS ASKED TO GIVE A SIGN OF HIS AUTHORITY, TO JUSTIFY HIS ACTIONS.

JESUS REPLIED: “DESTROY THIS TEMPLE AND IN THREE DAYS I WILL RAISE IT UP.”

HERE HE WAS NOT SPEAKING ABOUT THE BUILDING, BUT HIS BODY, HIS LIFE.

OF COURSE NO ONE WAS ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF HIS ANSWER UNTIL AFTER HIS CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION.

YEARS LATER, THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE ABOUT THIS. HE EXPLAINED THAT FOR CHRISTIANS, THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST DWELLING IN WITHIN US MAKES OUR BODIES INTO A TEMPLE.

EPHESIANS 2:21-22 SAYS -“IN CHRIST JESUS THE WHOLE STRUCTURE IS JOINED TOGETHER AND GROWS INTO A HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD, IN WHOM YOU ALSO ARE BUILT TOGETHER SPIRITUALLY INTO A DWELLING PLACE FOR GOD.”

FURTHERMORE, JESUS IS THE ONLY TEMPLE WE NEED BECAUSE IT IS THROUGH HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH THAT OUR SINS ARE ATONED FOR, AND SO NO OTHER SACRIFICE IS NECESSARY.

AND THE TRANSFERENCE OF THE GOD’S DWELLING PLACE ON EARTH FROM A STONE BUILDING, TO THE HUMAN BODY OF JESUS, FURTHER EMPHASIZES GOD’S DESIRE THAT FOCUS OF OUR WORSHIP SHOULD BE ON HIM ALONE.

THUS JESUS FULFILLS THE PURPOSE OF THE TEMPLE, LIKE HE FULFILLED THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW.

IN HIM BOTH THE LAW AND THE TEMPLE MEET AND THEY JOIN TOGETHER TO SHOW US THE LOVE AND THE WILL OF GOD.

AND HERE IS WHERE THE GOSPEL STORY CAN HAVE NEW MEANING FOR US. LENT INVITES US TO DO SOME SPIRITUAL HOUSE SCRUBBING AND POLISHING.

A PASTOR NAMED ERNIE ARNOLD SHARED A STORY FROM HIS YOUTH THAT SERVES AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THIS.

HE WROTE THAT WHEN HE WAS A TEEN HE EARNED MONEY BY MOWING LAWNS AND BY CLEANING HOUSES.

IN ONE HOME HE THAT HE CLEANED, THE LADY OF THE HOUSE WAS VERY PARTICULAR.

HE NOT ONLY HAD TO CLEAN THE WOOD FLOORS AND CABINETS IN THE KITCHEN, SHE ALSO WANTED THEM POLISHED UNTIL THEY SHINED.

REV. ARNOLD RECALLS IT TOOK A LOT MORE TIME AND EFFORT TO DO THE POLISHING, BUT HE ADMITS THE RESULTS MADE THE FLOOR AND CABINETS LOOK NEW.

THIS REMINDS US WE NEED TO ALLOW OUR SAVIOR TO CLEANSE OUR INNER BEING IN A SIMILAR WAY.

JESUS CALLS US TO PRAYERFULLY AND CAREFULLY EXAMINE OUR HEARTS, AND ASK FOR GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND HELP TO CLEANSE US FROM OUR SIN.

HE ALSO USES THE HOLY SPIRIT TO OPEN OUR EYES AND MINDS TO OUR SINFULNESS, US SO WE MAY REPENT. AND THEN JESUS OFFERS US MORE.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN HELP THOSE WHO ARE WILLING -TO SHINE LIKE POLISHED WOOD.

THE SPIRIT CAN OPEN OUR AWARENESS UP TO HIDDEN SINS- OUR FAULTS WE DO NOT WANT TO SEE.

WE CAN BE TRANSFORMED FROM JUST BEING FORGIVEN, TO BEING THOSE IN WHOM THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST SHINES FORTH.

AND WE CAN BEGIN OUR POLISHING BY REMEMBERING WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT.

WHILE CHURCH BUILDINGS, BIBLICAL LAW, AND THEOLOGICAL BELIEFS MAY PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN CHRISTIANITY; OUR FAITH IS NOT CENTERED ON SUCH THINGS.

INSTEAD IT IS ROOTED, GROUNDED, AND CENTERED IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, OUR GOD AND SAVIOR.

WHEN WE, WHO ARE CHRISTIAN, FOCUS ON THIS RELATIONSHIP WE ARE DRAWN CLOSER NOT ONLY TO THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD, BUT TO THE STRENGTH, COMFORT, AND HOPE ONLY GOD CAN GIVE.

YOU SEE, THE ONLY REAL AND LASTING COMFORT IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS FOUND IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD. OUR FAITH IS ALL ABOUT THIS RELATIONSHIP.

THE LORD PROMISES TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH US NO MATTER WHAT.

WE ARE ALSO PROMISED THAT IN LIFE AND IN DEATH NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE BOND OF LOVE JESUS CHRIST HAS CREATED BETWEEN HIS FATHER AND US.

THUS WE ARE INVITED AND ENCOURAGED TO TURN TO THE LORD- TO ACCEPT AND WELCOME BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOD WHO CALLS US EACH BY NAME, AND SENDS HIS SPIRIT TO DWELL WITHIN US.

HERE IS A PRAYER I FOUND THAT CAN HELP US BEGIN TO SHINE. LET US PRAY:

FREE ME THIS DAY, O LORD-
FROM ALL FEAR OF THE FUTURE,
FROM ALL ANXIETY ABOUT TOMORROW,
FROM ALL BITTERNESS TOWARDS ANYONE,
FROM ALL COWARDICE IN THE FACE OF DANGER,
FROM ALL LAZINESS IN THE FACE OF WORK,
FROM ALL FAILURE BEFORE OPPORTUNITY,
FROM ALL WEAKNESS WHEN THY POWER IS AT HAND.

BUT FILL ME-
WITH LOVE THAT KNOWS NO BARRIER,
WITH SYMPATHY THAT REACHES TO ALL,
WITH COURAGE THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN,
WITH FAITH STRONG ENOUGH FOR THE DARKNESS,
WITH LOYALTY TO THY KINGDOM'S GOAL,
WITH WISDOM TO MEET LIFE'S COMPLEXITIES,
WITH POWER TO LIFT ME TO THEE.

BE WITH ME FOR ANOTHER DAY, AND USE ME AS THOU WILT.
FOR CHRIST'S SAKE I PRAY. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: PSALM 19:7-14 & JOHN 2:13-22

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